

Training the Light Division

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The role of light infantry forces in the Army today is an evolving one that requires first an understanding of their capabilities and then a training program that will make the most of those capabilities.

A light infantry division must be capable of deploying anywhere in the world on short notice. It most likely will not have time to channel its training efforts into the specific areas a specific deployment may require. It therefore needs a training program that will enable the commander to react quickly to any assigned mission with soldiers and

leaders whose basic skills are well honed and whose understanding of their likely missions will allow them to respond effectively.

The need has become evident for the Army to consolidate all the training techniques now in use throughout the light infantry community, to refine the techniques and evaluate them as to efficiency, and then to further develop them into a usable package and publish them. Additionally, this process would show the areas in which training criteria are not yet being developed or practiced.

An analysis of after action reviews at

both the JRTC and the National Training Center (NTC) at Fort Irwin, as well as feedback from light division exercises in Korea and other locations, seems to reveal certain common training deficiencies that need attention:

Familiarity with Crew-Served Weapons. Soldiers must be totally familiar with their weapon systems, not only the employment of the weapons but also their special characteristics and ammunition re-supply requirements. Each crew member must be drilled in the duties of all the other crew members so the system can still function if



casualties should occur

Mastery of Individual Weapons. Light division soldiers must make every shot count. To develop and maintain their marksmanship skills, soldiers must shoot whenever possible.

Understanding the Mission. All members of the force—from squad leader to task force commander—must thoroughly understand the commander's intent. This is absolutely vital when light units take part in stay-behind missions or deep reconnaissance patrols. Because their present communication systems have some weaknesses, the soldiers in light forces must be able to act in the absence of instructions and have their actions fit within the overall plan of an operation. Units must practice this in training and hone their skills thoroughly.

Navigation in Unfamiliar Terrain. Every member of a light force needs to be absolutely proficient in navigation. Infantry soldiers obviously, but all members of this austere force, need to be highly capable land navigators. For example, drivers of evacuation vehicles will need to navigate while mounted during both daylight hours and periods of limited visibility. Resupply vehicles will move singly in many cases, and Signal personnel will travel the battlefield in small groups.

Survival on the Battlefield. Survival encompasses not only the skills that prevent casualties but also the soldiers' stamina and ability to traverse inhospitable terrain and still retain their offensive capabilities. If a soldier is to carry everything he will need and still be able to cover the required distances on foot, his individual load must be carefully studied and refined.

The first aid requirements for a light

soldier are much more demanding than those for other forces, because it may take longer to evacuate a casualty; in some cases, the mission may entirely preclude evacuation. To make sure his soldiers are properly supported, a light leader must understand logistics more thoroughly than ever.

Ability to Communicate. Communications have a greater effect on light infantry missions than they may appear to have. While the commander's intent, properly imparted to subordinates, can help fill this gap, information has to flow both up and down to control the operational effort over an extended period of time. The training must involve such diverse aspects as communications between sister units; long range communication requirements; field expedient antennas; the use of civilian systems that may be in place; wire; command and control vehicles (both air and ground); motorcycles and their proper use; and other methods such as signalling mirrors and pyrotechnics. Communication SOPs must be developed and practiced until using them becomes second nature to the soldiers.

Augmentation Forces. Because light units will receive augmentation forces that are tailored to the situation, leaders must be able to understand what those forces are and how to employ them properly. Then they must practice these skills in training and ensure that their soldiers understand the capabilities of those units.

Engineer Tasks. Since there will never be enough engineer support available, light soldiers need to become familiar with certain engineer tasks. For example, they can perform some demolition skills and cross obstacles without waiting for the engineers to come forward. Addi-

tionally, the small unit leaders of a light force need to understand the use of engineers to an even greater degree than the leaders of a heavy force.

Functioning in Limited Visibility. In each light infantry training exercise, soldiers must be trained and evaluated until they can function almost as well in limited visibility conditions as they can during daylight hours. The equipment available now must be used to the fullest extent possible, and new ways of defeating the darkness must be devised.

Mastery of Restrictive Terrain. The ability to control urban and other restrictive terrain is vital to a light infantry division; facilities for training in these operations must be developed and used to their fullest potential. The urban operations facilities already available must be scheduled so that the greatest possible number of units can become proficient in this area.

These lessons must not be allowed to fade; we must not force new units and new individual replacements to re-learn them over and over again. We must analyze and refine them into useful tools for light infantry leaders.

Analyzing the training that has been conducted at the combat training centers and during other training exercises is within our capabilities. We have an opportunity today to train as we will fight the first battle of the next war, and trainers at every level from squad to division must exploit this opportunity.

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